

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
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R 032057Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0813
INFO AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGAPA
USCINCSO
AMEMBASSY PANAMA

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, PN, GT, PEPR
SUBJECT: GENERAL LUCAS INAUGURATED

SUMMARY. PRESIDENT LUCAS' INAUGURATION TOOK PLACE WITHOUT MAJOR INCIDENT. HIS INAUGURAL ADDRESS APPEALED FOR UNITY; PLEDGED TO FIGHT CORRUPTION; AND SHOWED SENSITIVITY TO GUATEMALA'S SOCIAL PROBLEMS (INCLUDING LAND DISTRIBUTION), ENDEMIC VIOLENCE, HUMAN RIGHTS ASPECS, AND THE NEED FOR SELF-SUFFICIENCY IN FOODSTUFFS, WITHOUT OFFERING MUCH BY WAY OF PRESCRIPTION. HE SEEMED TO HOLD OUT THE POSSIBILITY OF CLOSER RELATIONS WITH COMMUNIST COUNTRIES, CONFIRMED (IN A SEPARATE STATEMENT) THE INTENTION OF RESTORING DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH PANAMA, AND OFFERED GOOD OFFICES TO HONDURAS AND EL SALVADOR. BELIZE RECEIVED MODERATE TREATMENT. ALTHOUGH THE WEEKEND WAS NOT WITHOUT INCIDENTS OF VIOLENCE, ONLY ONE APPEARED TO HAVE BEEN RELATED TO THE SUCCESSION.

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GOG SECURITY FORCES WERE VIGILANT BUT APPEARED TO TAKE NO INITIATIVES TO FERRET OUT DISSIDENTS. END SUMMARY.

1. THE JULY 1 INAUGURAL CEREMONIES CAME OFF WITHOUT INCIDENT, ALBEIT AMIDST HEAVY SECURITY, AT GUATEMALA'S SPANKING NEW NATIONAL THEATRE COMPLEX. AS WAS EXPECTED THE OPPOSITION MLN (INCLUDING OUTGOING VICE

PRESIDENT MARIO SANDOVAL) BOYCOTTED THE PROCEEDINGS. THEY WERE ATTENDED BY THE SMALLER OPPOSITION GROUPS -- DCG AND PRA. AS REQUESTED BY THE GOG, ONLY THE CENTRAL AMERICANS AND MEXICO SENT SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVES. THIS FOLLOWS THE "AUSTERITY" PATTERN ADOPTED IN THE 1974 CEREMONIES.

2. THE NEW PRESIDENT'S BRIEF INAUGURAL ADDRESSS CONTAINED FEW CONCRETE RECIPES FOR ADDRESSING CURRENT "DELICATE PERIOD" WHICH HE CANDIDLY DESCRIBED AS "CHARACTERIZED BY THE DETERIORATION OF HUMAN VALUES, INFLATION, MARGINATION OF THE MASSES, DEFICIENT HANDLING OFF AGRARIAN POLICY, THE GRADUAL ABANDONMENT OF HONESTY IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION, THE CONSTANT IMPROVERISHMENT OF LARGE SECTORS OF THE POPULATION IN THE FACE OF THE SELFISH ENRICHMENT OF A MINORITY, SECTARIAN INTRANSIGENCE AND POLITICAL INTOLERANCE." GUATEMALA'S ENDEMIC VIOLENCE, POLITICAL AND NON-POLITICAL, WHICH HAS UNDERMINED THE COUNTRY'S FRAGIL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS, WAS THE OUTGROWTH OF SOCIAL INEQUITIES AND POLITICAL APPETITES. APPEALING FOR UNITY, HE PROPOSED TO DEAL WITH THESE PROBLEMS THROUGH DIALOGUE, ORDER AND SECURITY BASED ON THE RULE OF LAW, THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE "GRADUAL AND PEACEFUL CHANGES THE POPULATION DEMANDS," AND ADMINISTRATIVE HONESTY.

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3. ON THE DEVELOPMENT SIDE, LUCAS GAVE HEAVY EMPHASIS TO THE NEED FOR RELIABLE SUPPLIES OF FOODSTUFFS FOR INTERNAL CONSUMPTION AND FOR AGRICULTURAL RAW MATERIALS. WITHOUT MENTIONING PANZOS, HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE LAND DISTRIBUTION PATTERN CONSTITUTED A "PERMANENT SOURCE OF FRICTION." THE CAMPESINO WAS THE VICTIM OF "UNJUST SYSTEMS." HE WOULD RECEIVE SPECIAL TREATMENT, WOULD BE GIVEN LAND AND WOULD BE SUITABLY ORGANIZED (PRESUMABLY AN ALLUSION TO THE COOPERATIVE MOVEMENT). PRACTICALLY DESCRIBING US AID PROPOSALS, HE PLEDGED TO PROMOTE NEW EMPLOYMENT SOURCES IN THE COUNTRYSIDE BASED ON AGRO-INDUSTRY AND HANDICRAFTS. HE CHOSE TO SYMBOLIZE HIS INTEREST IN RURAL GUATEMALA, AND PARTICULARLY HIS EMPATHY WITH INDIAN PROBLEMS, BY DELIVERING THE FINAL 3-4 MINUTES OF HIS SPEECH IN THE KEKCHI LANGUAGE OF HIS NATIVE ALTA VERAPAZ.

4. THE INTERNATIONAL ARENA, IN ADDITION TO MODERATE WORDS ON BELIZE (GUATEMALA 3865), HE PLEDGED SUPPORT FOR A REVITALIZATION OF THE CENTRAL AMERICAN COMMON MARKET (ALL CENTRAL AMERICANS, NOT JUST SOME, SHOULD SHARE IN BENEFITS), OFFERED GOG'S GOOD OFFICES TO

HONDURAS AND EL SALVADOR, AND PERHAPS HINTED AT AN EXPANSION OF RELATIONS WITH COMMUNIST COUNTRIES -- GUATEMALA "WILL, IF IN THE NATIONAL INTEREST, BE RECEPTIVE TO TIES OF FRIENDSHIP (SIC)" WITH THOSE NATIONS WHOSE GOVERNMENT ACCEPT INTERNATIONAL COEXISTENCE AND NON-INTERVENTION. (LUCAS HAS PRIVATELY INTIMATED THE POSSIBILITY OF INCREASED COMMERCIAL TIES AND EVENTUAL CONSULAR RELATIONS WITH SOME BLOC COUNTRIES.) THIS MIGHT ALSO HAVE SUBSUMED PANAMA: IN AN IMPROMPTU PRESS CONFERENCE LUCAS CONFIRMED PLANS TO RESUME DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH THE TORRIJOS GOVERNMENT.

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5. THERE WERE NO REFERENCES TO THE UNITED STATES, BUT HUMAN RIGHTS SENSITIVITY COULD BE READ INTO HIS PLEDGE TO "APPLY THE RULES CONTAINED IN TREATIES AND CONVENTIONS TO WHICH GUATEMALA IS A PARTY," PARTICULARLY RESPECT FOR THE RIGHTS OF MAN CALLED FOR IN THE UN CHARTER.

6. IN CONVERSATION WITH AMBASSADOR, NEW VICE PRESIDENT VILLAGRAN DRAMER CONSIDERED THE MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENTS OF THE ADDRESS TO HAVE BEEN THE BELIZE LANGUAGE, THE STRESS ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT, LUCAS' VOW TO FIGHT CORRUPTION AND THE OFFER OF GOOD OFFICES TO HONDURAS AND EL SALVADOR. VILLAGRAN SAID THE GOOD OFFICES LANGUAGE HAD BEEN CLEARED WITH THE INTERESTED GOVERNMENTS

LAST WEEK. HE NOTED THAT THE SALVADORAN VICE PRESIDENT HAD MISGIVINGS, TO THE POINT OF INTIMATING THAT GUATEMALA WAS "PRESSING." VILLAGRAN SAID THE SALVADORAN WAS BROUGHT AROUND BY VILLAGRAN DRAMER'S ARGUMENT THAT THE GOG'S SITUATION COULD BECOME VERY AWKWARD SHOULD THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DISPUTE BE ALLOWED TO GRAVITATE TO THE OAS.

7. THE ONLY INCIDENTS OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE TO MAR THE INAUGURAL WEEKEND WERE: (A) THE KILLING OF AN ACTIVIST PRIEST IN NEARBY SAN JOSE PINULA (SPTEL); (B) THE ABDUCTION/MURDER OF A COTTON GROWER IN SAN MARCOS DEPARTMENT WHICH MAY OR MAY NOT HAVE BEEN POLITICAL; AND (C) SHOTS REPORTED FIRED FROM A PASSING VEHICLE AT THE HOUSE OF DEFEATED MLN PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE COL. ENRIQUE PERALTA AZURDIA. THE LATTER'S PETITION TO VOID THE PRESIDENTIAL SUCCESSION (GUATEMALA 3748) IS STILL BEING ENTERTAINED BY THE SUPREME COURT WHICH HOWEVER, RULED THERE TO HAVE BEEN INSUFFICIENT GROUNDS TO SUSPEND THE SCHEDULED TRANSFER OF POWER. NOR HAS THERE BEEN ANY INDICTMENT THAT GOG SECURITY APPARATUS USED TO PRETEXT OF THREATS TO DISRUPT THE SUCCESSION TO ENGAGE IN ANYTHING OUT OF THE ORDINARY.

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